



Insurance and Climate Change

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Abstract: Debra Ballen is General Counsel and Senior Vice President of Public Policy for the Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS), a non-profit research and communications organization fully supported by the property insurance industry. IBHS's mission is to reduce the social and economic effects of natural disasters and other causes of property loss by conducting research and advocating improved land use, as well as residential and commercial building design, construction, maintenance, and preparation practices.

Ms. Ballen's remarks will focus on the role of IBHS's work in both protecting the natural and built environments, and helping communities adapt to the possibility of sea level rise, more frequent and intense hurricanes, drought-related wildfire, and other severe weather effects that may be the result of climate change. In this regard, IBHS takes a holistic view of the building performance chain as well as community resilience. Among the environmental benefits that can be achieved through property loss mitigation are: reduction of CO₂ and other greenhouse gas effects from fires; energy savings; reduction of waste in landfills and bodies of water; reduced vegetation loss due to wildfire; and a smaller carbon footprint for community reconstruction.

Adaptation elements include land use planning with a focus on catastrophe risk, design and construction that take actual and potential risk into account; retrofitting for sustainability and resilience; and incorporation of LEED and other environmental standards in a manner that focuses on "going green and building strong."

Ms. Ballen's presentation will include video highlights of IBHS's brand new, state-of-the-art building science Research Center in Richburg, South Carolina. The Research Center opened in October 2010 and provides a tangible symbol of the insurance industry's role in "insuring against climate change."

Summary: Ms. Ballen will discuss how mitigation protects the built and natural environments and facilitates climate change adaptation (sea level rise; more frequent, intense hurricanes and storms; drought-related wildfire). She will include video from IBHS' new Research Center – a significant insurance industry investment in reducing the impact of climate change.